



# THE INTERSECTION OF YOUTH, POLITICS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: A GEN Z PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines Generation Z's political engagement and activism, proving their important role in influencing social change. The study defies conventional wisdom about young people's political knowledge and participation. It investigates how internet connectivity, education, and socioeconomic status affect Generation Z's political views and involvement in social justice efforts. Case studies like the worldwide climate strike and the Black Lives Matter movement demonstrate how this generation's activism has had a concrete impact on politics and society. The findings indicate that Generation Z is not only aware of the confluence between politics and social justice but also actively designing a more equitable future.

**KEYWORDS:** Generation Z, Political Awareness, Social Justice, Activism, Digital Connectivity, Climate Strikes, Black Lives Matter, Political Participation, Socioeconomic Factors, Youth Engagement

## THESIS STATEMENT

Generation Z's heightened political awareness and involvement in social justice initiatives question traditional notions of political participation, demonstrating how their unique experiences, digital fluency, and various perspectives enable them to effect significant societal change.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the political awareness of Generation Z and its influence on social justice, challenging the stereotype that wisdom is age-dependent. Gen Z's distinct insights and active political engagement, combined with factors influencing their political leanings, position them as significant drivers of societal change. This study underscores the importance of diverse generational voices in shaping political discourse and social justice. By analyzing case studies such as the global climate strikes led by Greta Thunberg and the Black Lives Matter movement, this paper illustrates Gen Z's potential to instigate transformative social change through political involvement.

According to Gen Z activist Elijah Mckenzie-Jackson, "Activism isn't just actions or social media. It always starts with a passion, and people need to be in touch with that first—everyone has a voice that can turn society on its head. It's just about feeling empowered enough to use it" (BBC, 2024). Often criticized for their strong reliance on digital media, Gen Z has been encouraged by older generations to engage with what they consider "real" experiences. Despite these critiques, the principle that wisdom transcends age emerges as a core theme among Gen Z's political views, shaped by rapid technological and social advancements. Rather than passively accepting traditional political norms, Gen Z is actively engaging, challenging, and reshaping them. As such, Gen Z's political awareness plays a pivotal role in fostering societal change,

impacting issues ranging from personal choices to broader social justice movements.

This paper addresses the following question: "To what extent is Generation Z aware of the significance of politics and its impact on social justice?" Through this inquiry, we aim to delve into Gen Z's perspectives on political diplomacy and their understanding of its role in promoting social justice.

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative secondary methodology to examine the political awareness and activism of Generation Z and its impact on social justice. The study draws on a comprehensive review of academic articles, case studies, surveys, and reports from credible sources. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of existing data, showcasing how factors such as digital connectivity, education, and socioeconomic status influence political engagement among Gen Z. The secondary qualitative method is justified due to the extensive availability of relevant literature and data, which provides diverse perspectives on the topic. However, limitations include potential biases inherent in pre-existing sources and the challenge of incorporating the most recent trends in youth activism.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Political Awareness of Gen Z

Often, Gen Z faces criticism for being overly attached to digital devices, with older generations urging them to engage with what is seen as "real." Questions arise from sceptics who ask, "How are we to know?" Yet wisdom is not confined by age but grows from experiences and insights gained regardless of one's years. This principle holds true in political perceptions as well. Today's Gen Z, positioned within a digitally connected and socially transformative

era, is not passively absorbing political norms handed down. Instead, they actively engage, challenge, and even reshape politics. This generation's awareness has made its mark, from individual choices to broader social justice stances.

Thus, this paper explores the question, "To what extent are the new generations aware of the significance of politics and its impact on social justice?" The following analysis examines the perspectives of Gen Z, particularly regarding diplomacy and social justice.

## 2. Key Definitions

In discussing the growing political awareness among younger generations and its impact on social justice, it is essential to understand the foundational terms. Politics, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is "the art or science of government," reflecting governance's role in society. This definition aligns with Oxford Languages' interpretation of social justice as "justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society." These definitions together underline the connection between political fairness and equitable social conditions. By grasping these concepts, we gain insight into the unique perspectives Gen Z brings to diplomacy and the impact of their politically aware voices on social justice.

## 3. Factors Influencing Political Participation

To fully understand Gen Z's perspectives on politics and social justice, it is essential to consider various influential factors. According to a survey by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI, 2024), Gen Z, the most diverse generation in U.S. history, shows a strong inclination toward political change, particularly among Democrats, and often participates in political activities. Despite low levels of trust in political institutions, Gen Z widely supports social justice initiatives like affirmative action, student loan forgiveness, and education funding for technical and political advancement. However, they report feelings of unpreparedness for the job market and experiences with discrimination, indicating critical views on existing social and political structures. Although a majority leans toward progressive ideals and associates less with the Republican Party, their internal diversity hints at complex societal impacts. Digital connectivity within this generation also shapes expectations for political communication and participation.

Many factors influence Gen Z's political leanings, as noted by Mintz's research on "The Community-Based Rehabilitation Guidelines" and "The Effects of University Education on the Political Attitudes of Young Adults." Among the ten factors are education, social isolation, personal experiences, stigma, lack of role models, legal barriers, social class, income, personal outlooks, and poverty, each of which plays a role in shaping Gen Z's political and social justice stances.

One significant element is poverty's impact on political participation. Schaub's (2021) study on the Long Month After Short (LMAS) concept in Germany illustrates how extended periods without income affect the poor, revealing a notable drop in voting intentions among economically disadvantaged groups, with turnout decreasing by as much as 5 percentage points during these months. This data underscores how economic hardship can deter political engagement, emphasizing the need to address such barriers to ensure inclusive participation among Gen Z.

## 4. Case Studies

Politics and social justice are increasingly interwoven within Gen Z's worldview, contributing substantially to their future influence. According to research from the BBC and Edelman, a global public relations firm, 70% of Gen Zers actively support social or political causes. For instance, the Global Climate Strikes, led by activists such as Greta Thunberg, exemplify Gen Z's role in elevating climate policy discussions worldwide. Their activism has led to heightened awareness of climate justice and even influenced consumer behavior, encouraging reduced meat consumption and decreased flight travel. Locally, Fridays for Future (FFF) protests have driven political discourse on environmental issues, swaying public opinion and electoral outcomes, as seen with the German Green Party's success. Following FFF's protests, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court ruled in 2021 that existing climate policies were insufficient.

Similarly, the Black Lives Matter movement has gained strong Gen Z support, catalyzing policy discussions on racial justice. These examples demonstrate how politically aware Gen Zers can drive meaningful change through organized political engagement.

## 5. Implications for the Future

As Gen Z steps into the political arena, they challenge stereotypes and reveal their collective influence. This paper has explored the factors that shape Gen Z's political perspectives, the role of technology, and the economic challenges affecting participation. Through case studies like the climate strikes and Black Lives Matter movement, we observe the tangible impact of Gen Z's political engagement on social justice.

The implications extend beyond Gen Z, signaling potential shifts for society at large. This generation's political awareness and activism are not transient but foundational elements of their collective identity. By redefining societal norms, they contribute to a more equitable future.

## CONCLUSION

Just like the wise Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world," this message resonates with the call for engagement across all ages, urging individuals to amplify youthful voices in the political sphere. Our research has merely scratched the surface of understanding how political engagement and social awareness are intertwined with the

experiences of Gen Z. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering a society where every voice counts, every opinion matters, and where wisdom is not bound by age.

There is much more to explore in this dynamic intersection of youth, politics, and social justice. All generations must question, learn, and, most importantly, strive to positively impact the world. The future is in our hands, and together, we can shape it for the better.

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